

It is not only age which puts a man on record along this line, and admits him and rejects him, but also his general deportment or way in life.

And when we view the Dead Line from these angles, age has nothing to do with it.

When you see a preacher, I care not of what denomination, gradually forming habits which are detrimental to his ministerial character and dignity, such as slovenliness in dress and in person, with dirty hands and finger nails, with his clothes merely hanging on him, with his vest buttoned to his coat, with his pockets torn down, with grease spots here and there on his clothes, with only the front or toes of his shoes blackened, with nothing tidy about him, presenting such an uncomely appearance that his parishioners feel ashamed of him, etc., etc., such a preacher may reach the Ministerial Dead Line at the age of thirty or thirty-five.

Again, when you see a preacher idling away precious time on store boxes, cracking jokes, and telling unsavory yarns, may bring the Dead Line anywhere from the age of twenty five to seventy years of age.

Again, when you see a preacher stepping down and out of so noble a calling as the Gospel Ministry, and enter the political field, stoop to political trickery, scheming, wire-pulling, and underhand work, resort to unfair means to gain his point, becomes assimilated to ungodly men and their ungodly plans, and have a burning desire to ride into office, if necessary at the sacrifice of principle and right, on the principles and by the help of a party which legalizes the damnable and accursed whiskey traffic, such a preacher has already crossed the Dead Line, and I have never heard of one prodigal among the many who have crossed the line, in this way, that was restored to usefulness and an influence for good in the Gospel Ministry.

Again, when you see a preacher, for the sake of filthy lucre, who has been ordained to the full ministry, and I suppose called of God, either refuse to enter such a sphere of usefulness as the active ministry, or vacate the pulpit and enter some of the professions because there is more money in it, has by his own free will and choice created the Dead Line in his life, and has cheerfully stepped over it. All such fail to grasp the Gospel truth of profit and loss. Their actions imply that they prefer laying up treasures on earth where moth doth corrupt and thieves break thru and steal, rather than lay up treasures in heaven where moth doth not corrupt neither do thieves break thru and steal, so far as the gospel ministry is concerned.

No wonder the Lord said the harvest is great and the laborers are few.

There are some localities and possibly some congregations of the Brethren church dying for the want of the bread and water of eternal life, simply because the church has not enough vehicles in the form of gospel preachers, to carry it and deal it out to them.

The great command is go, go teach, go disciple, go preach, go into the highways and hedges, go minister to the needy, go comfort the broken hearted and go visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

But in the face of all this some will settle down to some lucrative business and bury the talents which God gave them.

Martin Luther once said the defects of a preacher are soon spied. Let a preacher be endued with ten virtues and but one fault, yet that one fault will eclipse and darken all his virtues and gifts. For example, a man may have all the virtues and qualities possible for a man to have but if he hums and spits, the people can not bear that good and honest man. The sun is never so much looked at as when it has a black spot upon it or eclipsed.

Again it can be truly said that a preacher has reached the Dead Line, when he ceases to study, when he reaches that point in his life that he feels that he need not any more apply himself to study and preparation, that all he needs to do is to turn the barrel up and grind out only that information which he gathered in his younger life.

Digging is very essential to gold mining and in order to mine the rich golden treasures found in the blessed gospel, we must keep digging. When a preacher ceases to acquaint himself with divine things, when he ceases to inform himself on living issues, Bible truths, and doctrines, when a preacher thinks he knows it all, and this is not always confined to the old preacher, and when he thinks there is nothing more for him to learn, when he lives in the past so far as literary research is concerned, and when he shuts himself out from any newly developed ideas, truths or systems or means of accomplishing good, plans that would be approved of by God, he has crossed the Dead Line in the ministry. There are men to whose minds no new ideas or plans of work can find access at the age of thirty, while there are men whose minds are open to the reception of truth and mental activity at the advanced age of eighty.

Paul says "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Let us again turn to the old clergyman.

When a preacher crosses the Dead Line because of old age or failure in health it is commendable. Tho he should become feeble and old fashioned, think of him when he was young, how you loved to sit at his feet to hear him talk about Christ our Lord and divine things, and when he did so much good in the community. It is then that he should be made comfortable, and should be well cared for the few remaining days that may be allotted to him in this life.

But one sad mistake is often made by the younger members of the church; and that is, they think that the preacher is too old many times when he is not. They get the idea that they must have a younger man, that unless they unload the old pastor and get a young man, the church will lose her power for good and finally go to sticks.

And in order to gain their point they will file the following objections: viz: He is too old fashioned or old foggy like, and give as reasons for these objections: 1. He never announces any of the modern songs; 2. He never adopts any new plans of work; 3. He continually sticks in the old ruts. His diction is not modern, his grammar is not up to date, his vocabulary is not up with the times, he talks too slow, he can not move around as briskly as he once could, he had to get another pair of glasses last week, and possibly they will take a little trip down the ancestral line for three or four generations to see what they might be able to find against him there.

They cry long and loud against the venerable old preacher.

Communications are flying at a rapid rate thru the mails in reference to the need of a younger preacher. They cry and write by the yard and think by the inch.

If they would only stop and think, they possibly would discover, at least in many cases, that he who had been their spiritual adviser all their lives, could give them more wholesome food and more spiritual meat from his fund of knowledge and mental activity and wide experience than many younger men whom they might employ. Let me say that only those who have sounded the waters of life can tell of their depth.

When the old veteran preacher was so prominently brought before me in this topic, I thought of Samuel, the great king-maker, when in his decrepit age would walk the streets of Ramah, and, possibly, the boys and girls of that town and even parents would stop him and gather around him and he would relate to them the experience of his long and useful life.

Another sad mistake is sometimes made by the old minister. And that is, he expects too much when he gets old.

Altho in the prime of his life he served as pastor some of the best congregations in the church to which he belonged, he should not expect it when he gets old and should be satisfied with a more ordinary charge. And not feel hurt or that he is seriously turned down.

There is such a thing as not keeping up with the times or with the advancement in intellectual development and literary attainments.

Sometimes there is a good deal of complaining among some old preachers, because they do not get as many calls as they did when they were young.

Might not this be, largely, because they are behind or not keeping up with the times.

Ian Maclaren or Dr. Watson in his able article in the Ladies' Home Journal on the subject "Should the old clergyman be shot," says that there is a time when the old minister comes to be a brake on the coach and while the brake is a useful thing in its own place, it is a poor substitute for horses. He also says that aged ministers in active duty become a hindrance and assigns as his reasons the following: An obsolete theology,